

Strange and Wonderful

# NEWS

FROM

## DURHAM.

OR THE

## Virgins Caveat

AGAINST

## INFANT-MURDER.

A

## FAIR Warning

To all Beauteous

Young Ladies to withstand the Temptations

of dissolute Gallants, shewing the Impossibility of Concealing  
their Sin. Set forth in a RELATION of an Infant

Murdered by its Mother in the Bishoprick  
of *Durham*.

Which Appeared to a certain Woman, and discovered its Mother, its Place  
of Burial, and the Reason of its Walking.

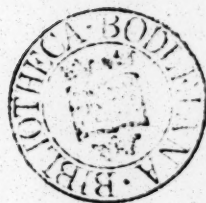
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Sent by C. E. to his Friend in London.

PSAL. 19. 13. *Keep back thy Servant from presumptuous sins, then shall I be  
upright.*

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LONDON, Printed Anno Dom. 1679.





## *The Virgins Caveat against Infant-Murther.*

**A**S the Mercies of the Almighty are to a Miracle admirable, so his Judgements on some Sinners are also prodigious; for though we commit our Sins under the Covert, both of the Night and the Closet; though with our Parents we sowe Fig-leaves before our shame, yet ere the Evening of our days God espies our Hypocrisie, and through that thin Veil, that painted Sepulchre, discerns the Rottenness and Corruption within; for although in respect of the slender capacity of mortal man, the Heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, none can know it; yet the glorious Eye of the divine Providence easily dissipates those Clouds, makes our secret Sins as palpable as the Noon-day Sun, and not only proclaims our Offences to the World, but frequently gives our Enormities leave to shame us in this World, and condemn us too; but of all those Sins, (which are more in number then the Hairs of our Head, so that our Hearts may upon too good Grounds) none are more provoking then the Breach of the sixth and seventh Commandments, the second Coining and Imprinting Gods Image without his Licence, nay, expressly against his Consent, as the former does deface it in despite of his Command; And as he did not spare *David* in this case, though a Man after Gods own Heart, but Afflicted him with temporal punishments as he would have done with eternal, if his timely Repentance had not interposed; so in the like circumstances, even in our days we see some stormes and severities, some dreadful effects of the Terrours of the Lord of Hosts, and none in our late days has bin more Remarkable, then that which gives Occasion to our ensuing Discourse.

Mr. *Elizabeth B---* was born in the Bishoprick and City of *Durham*; and when the wonderful Instructions and exemplary Piety of her incomparable Mother, had added these two most precious Jewels of *Religion* and *Modesty*, she bade the World *Good-Night*, in an Age far short of that which *David* calls *Trouble and Sorrow*; However, her Dissolution was no whit untimely, since it prevented her from seeing the fairest Blossom that ever sprang from so precious a Mother-Plant, blasted by a lamentable and deplorable Accident.

The First fruits she had brought forth in the yeares immediately succeeding her Mothers Decease, were suitable to the good Seed which had been sown in so rich a Mould; None of her Neighbors (though many very admirable) struck sail to this Excellency; She her self was her only Comparison for Beauty.

Freighted thus with this inestimable Cargo, by the Assent of her Friends, but hurried rather by an unhappy Tempest, she at the last Arrived at the most Debauched and most Civilized Place in the World, our Magnificent Metropolis of London; Her Actions at her Arrival were such, that they convinced all that knew her, that she had the most unsporting Soul lodged in the most beautiful Body in the World; All those Summer-Flies which endeavour to sully and corrupt our choicest and most perfect Fruit, met here with nothing but scorn and contempt, even those who made more Noble Addresses, could discern small Grounds of obtaining their desired Object: Had our Cherubim here pitched her *non Plus ultra*, and shut her Ear against the Insinuations of the degrade Angel, she might have answered those excellent Qualifications she was endowed with.

But from the first Fall, our Grand-Mother Eve has Entailed such weakness on her succeeding Generations, since Pleasure, Curiosity, Pride and Idleness lay claim to so large a share of our young Ladies time, since the delusions of *Romances*, and Absurdities of the Stage, dispose of almost all the rest of their most serious hours; What can we look for but Tares among the Wheat, and then the Inference in the Gospel will be very fit, *Inimicus homo fecit hoc*.

But to return from a Transport that wou'd give an Alarm to the most frozen Zeal. This Miracle of Women who hitherto had breathed nothing but the most miraculous Efforts of Vertue and Chastity, too soon alas gave credit to the Oaths and Insinuations of a beloved Person, and abandoned her self to the enjoyment of such Pleasures as are only the lawful Concomitants the Marriage-Bed; This pleasure (as all others, whose Foundation is sin) did at the length spout up into Shame; She by her daily Qualms and Sicknesses too late perceived and repined at the cause of her Distemper; But as the on'y means of concealing her growing shame, she retired into the Bishoprick of *Durham*, to remove, if possible, the uncomfortable Burthen both of her soul and body. The rest of her time was spent in a privacy  
answerable



insufferable to her Condition and melancholy Humour, nothing was wanting in that accomplished Place which might not have retrieved *Heracles* himself from his doleful dumps, and continued weeping; She only, I believe, was a perpetual Monument of her own Easiness and Shame, and in this a Miracle that very few have ever repented so much of this sin, never any to so little purpose.

At the near Approach of his Delivery did necessitate her to resolve on something in order to her disposal of the product of unpleasant pleasure; None need question but her thoughts were at great variance, fear of discredit and dishonour from without, and Apprehensions of disquietness, vexation from within, a long time, did equally share her distracted soul; But was it me, the former Passion so soon obtained the Conquest, and the distance of the latter made the greater Object appear the less, and she resolved (with the Corps of her Murthered Infant) to bury her Confusion and shameful disgrace;

In order whereunto, being privately brought to bed, and blinding her condition under pretence of indisposition, upon her delivery she stabbed her Bodkin into it under its left Arm, and put a Period to that Series of Breathing, which had but newly begun and commenced, the Infant was buried with the greatest Privacy, and one old Woman only conscious of the Secret, to whom it was necessary to communicate it, she being employed in washing her shifts, Sheets, and what Linnen else soever, she was fain to make use of on so sad and lamentable occasion; Upon the Recovery of some small strength, (under the Vizor of bettering her Health) she privately retired into *Richmond-shire*, to the House of a faithful Friend, where she lived very retiredly, oppress'd (as it should seem) with some inward trouble, although there was not the least suspicion or whispering of her Crime, so that she might upon great probabilities cry Peace, peace, as the *Jews* did, when a terrible destruction hung over their Heads.

Whilst all things seem'd as obscure as the fatal Night, and her guilt deep buried in the Grave of her Child, A Report was buzzed about of a little Infant appearing Nightly to some or other; but there was one Woman it more especially pitched upon, who lived near to the old Woman before-mentioned, which washed the Cloathes. *March 27.* it appeared to this young woman (whose Name was *Mary Coward*) all bloody, with the Marks of its Mothers cruelty very apparent upon it; and the All-powerful God, who out of the Mouth of this Babe and Suckling ordained praise, was pleased

fed to lend it an Articulate Voice, which it made use of to desire *Mary Coward* to declare its Murther, and the occasion of its being remanded to the World; The First Time of its appearing she imagined herself only deluded by Melancholy, or some Enthusiastick Fancies; But being solicited to the performance of this Request by her little Petitioner, she began more seriously to consider the Vision, and with a more serious Eye to look upon that, which till then she looked upon as only idle and frivolous.

One Night among the rest she being very much pressed by that pretty Solicitor, was at length so bold as to ask *Who was its Mother, the Occasion of its Death and Walking, and who were privy to that hainous Offence?* But when she heard the Name of the beauteous *Elizabeth*, and had well considered the Reputed Vertue of that person, her Curiosity was at an end, and she no longer look'd upon that little Angel of Light, but as an Imp of the Father of Lies; but being incessantly both urged and threatned in case of neglect, she at last communicated her trouble to a Friend, her Friend to another, that to a third, till the City Rang of it, and the Maid was in great danger of suffering something of persecution from her Alliance.

And now being greatly afflicted at her too too easie Credulity, and blaming herself for thus burning her Lips in other Folks pottage, she had Recourse to two of the surest Stays of this Life, her Heavenly Father, and her own Innocency; But as she was retired to her Apartment, the little Babe comes, and comforts her, acquaints her with the place of its Burial, and that her Aunt was privy to its Birth, if not to its Murther: Going next day with some of her Intimates to see that Sepulchre, they, according to the Information given them, found a most beautiful Corps, in all things suitable to the Fairest, the most deluded Mother in the World. whereupon having Recourse unto *John Morland Esquire*, one of His Majesties Justices of the Peace for the City and County of *Durham*, he granted out a Warrant to apprehend the suspected persons, and with all possible speed and secrecie to bring them before him; The old Woman denied not, but that she had observed all the Marks of a Woman in Child bed on the Linnen of the fair *Elizabeth*, but how she had disposed of the Child she pretends to be wholly ignorant.

The beautiful Unfortunate was the next who was enquired after, but though the Officers went to the place of her Residence, yet she was denied strongly, so that they were forced to get a Reinforcement of their Authority from some Justices in *Richmond-shire*, and upon search they found her out

in the place of her Retirement, and being brought before Authority, she could not deny that of which there were so many and irrefragable proofs; Whereupon she was *April 5.* committed into Custody, where she now remains in expectation of a Trial, the Event thereof next *Lammis* Assizes will acquaint us with; She now living unfortunately in having the fairest Table in the World sullied with the two grievous blemishes of Fornication and Murther: I desire God to give her a true sight and sense of her offences, and a Repentance answerable to the greatness of them,

This sad Example may serve for a *Caveat* to all young Ladies and Maids, not to yield up their Virgin honour to any, though upon the most specious pretence, not to give Ear to the Oaths and protestations of the most passionate Pretenders, since all their Rhetorick and Eloquence has no other end then the utter destruction of the Object of their desires. And if any has been so imprudent and easie, as already to have given way to such exorbitant desires, let them not, as they tender the welfare of both soul and body, ever propose to themselves even a possibility of concealing their shame by the addition of a sin; for though our blessed Saviour did deny to send one from the dead to convince the Brothers of *Dives*, *Luke 16.* yet this Example, and many others, may sufficiently convince us, that if we be guilty of such grievous sins, he will send one from the dead to detect us in this World, and condemn us too.

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